

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Domestic Policy of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee today announced the release of a 33-page report entitled "Reducing Dental Mercury Emissions: Installing Amalgam Separators and Achieving Compliance." The report follows two hearings and a national survey conducted by the Subcommittee Majority Staff over the past year examining the environmental risks of mercury contamination.

"Reducing toxic mercury is a critical step toward protecting human health and the environment, especially when the solution is easily within our reach," said Kucinich. "The benefits from preventing 6.5 tons of dental mercury from polluting our water and air far outweigh the cost of removing it, which in some cases is as little as 54 cents per dental patient a year," said Kucinich.

The report examines the efficacy of amalgam separator units, which reduce dental mercury emissions into wastewater. The report also evaluates state and local regulations promoting the use of amalgam separator units. Nine states and at least twelve counties have passed provisions mandating that dental offices install amalgam separator units which reduce dental mercury releases by up to 99%.

The Subcommittee report concludes that amalgam separator units are easy to install in dental offices and inexpensive to operate. The report also concludes that the best way to achieve compliance by dentists is to implement a mandatory program or a voluntary program underpinned by the threat of a mandatory provision. In some cases, such as in King County, Seattle, compliance increased from 2.7% to 97% once a mandatory provision was implemented.

A study by Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies found that the dental industry is 'by far' the largest contributor of mercury found in wastewater, almost three times more than the next largest contributor. Once in wastewater, mercury attaches to sludge and is released into the environment as a result of incinerating sludge, using it as fertilizer, and burying it in landfills. Local sanitary districts have found that treating wastewater is cost prohibitive and have opted to prevent dental mercury from entering the wastewater instead. Also this week, EPA released a report entitled "Health Services Industry Detailed Study: Dental Amalgam."

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Documents and Links

- [Staff Report](#)